

CHRISTIAN and CRITICAL
R E M A R K S

On a Droll, or Interlude, called

The M I N O R.

Now acting by a Company of Stage
Players in the Hay-market;

A N D

Said to be Acted by AUTHORITY.

I N W H I C H

The Blasphemy, Falshood, and Scurrility of that Piece
is properly considered, answered, and exposed.

By a MINISTER of the CHURCH of CHRIST.

— *And others had Trial and cruel Mockings.*
Heb. ch. xi. part of ver. 36.

L O N D O N :

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market. 1760. [Price One Shilling.]

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION
J. E. M. A. K. S.

THE M. I. N. O. R.

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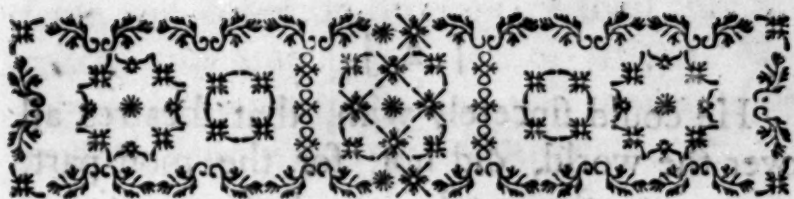
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CHRISTIAN and CRITICAL REMARKS, &c.



WHETHER stage entertainments are by any means allowable according to the doctrines of Christ, and the rules of his most holy gospel, has a long time ago been disputed by the saints and the fathers of the Church; and in the same manner is at this day questioned by many learned, wise, and religious men.

But it is not the design of the writer of the following pages, to enter at present into cavils about the lawfulness, or unlawfulness of theatrical representations; it is sufficient for his purpose, that it is on all hands granted, that the stage, unless under proper regulations, is a nuisance, a school of debauchery, blasphemy, and immorality; and as such an open violation of all laws, human and divine.

B

He

He could sincerely wish, that theatres all over the world, did not, for the most part, come into the catalogue of abominations; or that the theatres of his own country were an exception to the general rule; but he is sorry to say, so far from it, that he believes there is not a civilized people in the universe, at least he is sure there is no christian people to be found, whose plays are so prophane, and so immoral as those of the English; insomuch that except the truly pious Mr. Addison, and the learned and religious Dr. Young, there are scarce any poets (whatever their other merits may be) who have left us a single tragedy or comedy fit for any thing, but to be represented in the orgies of a Cybele or of a Venus, in which we are assured all kind of debauchery and wantonness were practised.

But comedy and tragedy are works which require too great a share of natural parts, for the run of our modern witlings to come up to; we must therefore content ourselves with pantomines, mimes, and farces; in which the authors are able to copy their predecessors in nothing but their wickedness and impudence.

I shall not enumerate the various species of these kinds, which have appeared of late years, equally to the scandal of common sense

sense and common decency ; I shall only remark, that among this class of writers, Mr. Foote is the foremost, and will now confine myself intirely to his performance.

He indeed has shot a bow's length beyond any of his competitors, and seems to have brought the stage to that pitch of licentiousness, which Saint Austin tells us it appeared at in the decline of the Roman empire : I pray to God, that the countenance he meets with may be no ill omen to the British constitution ; yet as Mr. Foote has thought proper to tell us, in the introduction to his new piece, that mimicks and buffoons were held in great estimation by that polite and learned people the Romans : I own the fact charged against them to be true ; but at the same time I must take the liberty to tell him, that it was not so till those Romans, warped from their original integrity, had lost their virtue, and that as their fondness increased for such miscreants, they still kept putting farther and farther out into in the sea of vice and folly ; till they were at last swallowed up in the gulph of destruction.

I said that this gentleman had shot a bow's length beyond any of his competitors in debauching, if possible, and debasing the stage. He has done by this, by doing that which

nobody else in these kingdoms ever had the confidence to attempt; I mean by the introduction of real and living characters into his pieces. That this was the original method of comedy nobody can deny: But the sensible Athenians found the ill consequence of it, when not even the wise and virtuous Socrates could escape the ridicule of that ribbald Aristophanes.

However, if vicious characters only were to be exposed in this manner, tho' even in that case it would be liable to many exceptions, there could not be so much said against it. Vice, nay even folly, incurs the lash of ridicule, and deserves to feel its stripes; but it may be seen, as in the case above mentioned, that vice and folly are by no means the particular marks aim'd at, but an indiscriminate ridicule of every thing, however faultless or even sacred, to favour a mimick in exhibiting talents, which, tho' laugh'd at, are at the same time despised.

But that Mr. Foote's sole intent in his productions, is at the expence of any thing, even of truth and decency, to display his knack at mimickry, is a matter which I think does not come within the verge of dispute; I am told that it is not above two or three winters ago, since he thought proper to bring

a very innocent and honourable gentleman and his wife upon the stage. I say I am told this, for I hope I know my duty to God and man too well ever to be either a reader or a spectator of such abominable representations; but the family had interest enough to have the farce suppress'd: however this is a convincing argument of my foregoing assertion. But if characters were not naturally ridiculous, somebody will say, he could not make them so; is there no such thing then as shewing characters in a false light? The devils may, and in all probability do mimic and ridicule the angels, but are those blessed spirits therefore ridiculous in themselves; and shall we judge of a person by the figure he makes in Mr. Foote's distorting prism?

The MINOR, a piece of this gentleman's, which is now performing, we are told by authority, and with great applause, is of the same nature as his other productions, it is the only one I ever looked into, and the whole excellence of it, seems to consist in this; it is a ridicule of the people called Methodists in general, and of a person in particular, whom God, through his infinite goodness, has thought proper to make an humble instrument in calling numbers to the state of salvation.

The

The author makes a promise to bring this person on the stage in his introduction ;
 “ What think you,” says he, “ of one of
 “ those itinerant field orators, who though
 “ at declared enmity with common sense,
 “ has the address to poison the principles,
 “ and at the same time pick the pockets of
 “ half our industrious fellow subjects !

And again,

“ I consider these gentlemen in the light
 “ of public performers like myself, and
 “ whither we exhibit at Tottenham-Court
 “ or the Hay-market, our purpose is the
 “ same, and the place is immaterial.

Again,

“ Ridicule is the only weapon against this
 “ poison. This is a madness which argu-
 “ ment can never cure, and should a little
 “ wholesome severity be applied, persecuti-
 “ on would be the immediate cry ; where
 “ then can we have recourse, but to the
 “ comic muse ; perhaps the archness and se-
 “ verity of her smile, may redress an evil,
 “ that the law cannot reach, or reason re-
 “ claim.

A heavy charge this against the methodists, and their poor pastor, and if they are guilty, very wretched must their case be indeed; impostors, robbers, sowers of sedition, and madmen. God help them were they to be judged and sentenced by the bar of this perverse world: but there is a tribunal, where I trust they will one day stand, as fairly acquitted in the eyes of both men and angels, as they are already in their own consciences.

In the mean time, let us examine a little what it is these terrible, these abominable methodists, and their teachers do, to have raised the voice of popular clamour against them.

There are many magistrates in this city and kingdom in general, I believe, who can remember what the bulk of the common people of England were about twenty years ago. In and about London particularly, nothing were more frequent than murders and robberies in the streets and highways: but let these magistrates be ask'd now, and I dare swear they will confess, that things have been upon the mending hand ever since, till at length the lower class of people are reduc'd to a regularity and good behaviour, that is not to be

be paralleled in the inhabitants of any nation upon earth, where the numbers are so great, and the metropolis so extensive.

Now I would be glad to know, to what this happy change has been owing; shall I venture to answer? to a sense of religion, which for these last twenty years have been growing among the commonality; a sense which has restrain'd their natural dissoluteness, corrected the defects of education, and open'd their understanding, to hear and believe the word of God in the scriptures.

But it seems their pastor "poisons their principles." Ay! does he teach them to be whoremongers, or adulterers; robbers, or murderers; gluttons, or drunkards; or to rebel against their lawful prince?

It is imputed to him that he has preach'd in the fields; he does not deny it; what he taught therefore he taught openly; the world was left to judge of it: and no doubt if he had advanced such damnable doctrines as these, the people would have taken up stones and stoned him: but on the contrary will it not be found? I trust in God it will, on an unprejudiced examination, that his doctrines have been very different: he has preached chastity, justice, and honesty; temperance, sobriety,

fobriety, and loyalty, and that with such success, that if there should be a rebellion in England tomorrow, which God of his infinite mercy forbid, he does not doubt but that twenty thousand of his flock, fraught with these principles, would raise with one hand and one heart, to repel the invaders of their king and country.

If these things are true then, as truths most assuredly they are, how doth he want common sense? what St. Paul preach'd was to the Greeks foolishness, yet I hope no christian will venture to tax it as such; the common sense then he is said to want, is foolishness with God, and God grant he may ever want it; yea, if a zeal for the service of Jesus Christ, and a neglect of the world for serving that great master; if an unshaken love for his poor uninstructed fellow creatures, and a disinterested regard for their salvation; in a word, if a lively sense of all religious and social duties is folly, may he go down to the grave a very idiot.

But there is another very heavy charge against him; namely, his picking the pockets of half of our industrious fellow subjects. that the greater part of his people, I had almost said his children, for I am convinc'd in that light he looks upon them; that the most

C

part,

part, I say, of the methodists, tho' not all, are of the middling and lower class of people, may be perceiv'd by any one who goes to that despised place the tabernacle, where every Sunday several thousands may be seen doing their duty to God.

Indeed it is to be hoped that they are not to be esteemed less industrious for this; for the person who as often as his health and his care of distant flocks, for blessed be God he is not confined to one field, will permit him, preaches to them, has always taught them that, tho' their duty to God is the first concern, yet there is another duty which he no less exacts of them; namely, their duty to their neighbours, which is by no means to be neglected, but industriously followed in the necessary avocations of life.

It is true indeed, that in preaching to those people their duty to their neighbours, he has excited them to many works of charity and divine love, which has at different times been turn'd to the advantage of the widow and the orphan; the sick, the afflicted, and those that have none to help them; these donations, to the glory of God and this country, have been confined to no set communion or people, but have been diffused almost all over the whole world, and through their means,

means, the worship of the true God has been planted where heathenism and ignorance had before taken root.

Yet, tho' the fruit has been large, the seeds has been small ; and mostly gather'd in very mites. Is this picking the pockets of the industrious ; or is it turning to the glory of God and the good of his creatures, that which was before spent in idleness and debauchery ; what the mechanic used to lay out at the ale-house and gin-shop, or perhaps to worse purposes, he now gives to the poor ; ay but that is left to his Almoner, who gives it to the poor if he pleases.

If the congregations of the faithful have at different times intrusted sums of money with their pastor, there have always been accounts laid before them, and those back'd by proper receipts and authorities not to be disputed : but if the person aim'd at in the reflection, was wicked enough to turn that money to his own emolument, which pious Christians have deposited with him for holy and charitable uses, how has the orphan house of Georgia been founded and maintained ? how have those two neat but unadorn'd buildings, the Tabernacles at Tottenham-court and Moor-fields, been raised

from the ground, with their contiguous charity houses, to the great comfort and joy of the well-disposed? what interested view could he have in exposing himself to the dangers of the seas in voyages to his West-Indian plantation of christians? what earthly view could he propose to himself from painful journeys, sleepless nights, and toilsome days? None! the world has paid him as he expected with contempt, reproach and derision: It is plain therefore, that he look'd for a reward in that place, where tears shall be wiped away, stripes healed, and where the stone which was rejected by the builders, is become the head stone of the corner.

Upon what appearance then can his enemies found their malicious insinuations, that he turns the charities of his brethren to his own private use; is it upon his having built a palace for his residence? No; for after allowing his house to be barely convenient, it will be found to be mean. Is it upon his regaling himself with the variety of dainties, and keeping a superb table? No; for those that know any thing of him will tell you, that nothing ever appears at his simple board, beyond what is necessary for sustaining nature; and that he rather shares what he has with the poor, than throws it away upon superfluities: perhaps then his
habit

habit is rich, and his equipage magnificent ; far from it : all then, that his enemies can say of this man is, that in return for his spiritual pains, he is kept in that decency which his profession requires ; all they can say of him is, that he maintains an equal condition, that he is not rioting in luxury to-day, and begging and starving to-morrow, as some are reported to be, who verily and indeed pick the pockets of the public, and not only so, but do all in their power to damn their souls into the bargain.

We have heard of expelling a poison with a poison, and we have heard Mr. Foote say, “ I must beg leave to assert, that ridicule is the only antidote against this pernicious poison ; this is a madness argument can never cure ; and should a little wholesome severity be applied, persecution would be the immediate cry ; where then can we have recourse but to the comic muse ; perhaps the archness and severity of her smile, may redress an evil the law cannot reach, or reason reclaim.”

It is well known the laws of England have long arms ; all that can be said, is, that they never stretch them out but against those who offend them ; a hard matter then indeed would it be, were they to lay hold of the poor methodists,

thodists, one of whose chief tenets injoin the strictest observance of them, both religious and civil, and who never meet but to implore the blessings of God upon them, their protectors and defenders.

But methodism is a madness that argument can never cure: how so; what are their doctrines, what is their belief; do their ministers preach, or have they any article of faith, contrary to the scripture or the church by law established? I'll tell you what the methodists believe; they believe in one God and his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith in whom we shall be saved: this is the one thing needfull for our being justified in the sight of God. St. Paul says, *by grace ye are saved through faith—and that lest any man should boast, for eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Yet imagine not, that the methodists deny good works; but they say this is not the necessary condition of salvation, it is indeed the necessary fruit and consequence of faith, for we are commanded to shew forth, or declare to others that we have a true faith by our works.

Nay, the twelfth article of our church says, that good works follow after justification; how then are they a necessary condition of
our

our justification? No; salvation, if the gospel be true, is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ: faith is the means whereby that salvation is apply'd to our hearts, and good works are the necessary fruits and proofs of that faith.

This is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. This is the doctrine of the church of England. This is the doctrine of the methodists; and if it be madness, I once more pray God they may never return to what some people call sober reason.

Thus far we have seen little more than scurvious reflections upon a person, who has meekness and Christian charity enough to believe, that Mr. Foote only made use of him as the likeliest means to raise a temporary subsidy upon the public; but now we shall shew where he has reverted from man to God; and in a word, where he has run into direct blasphemy.

In order to paint the methodists in the most odious and ridiculous light, he introduces one Mrs. Cole, a bawd, whom he insinuates is a member of their society: "She just
" stopt in her way," says Dick, " to the
" Tabernacle; after exhortation, she says, she
" will call again."

" Sir

“ Sir GEORGE.

“ Exhortation ! Oh, I recollect ; well,
“ while they only make profelytes from that
“ profession, they are heartily welcome to
“ them.”

Would to God that they could not only
make profelytes from that profession, but for
Mr. Foote's sake, from all devilish professions
to God and religion ; but Sir George goes on,
“ she does not mean to make a convert
“ of me.”

“ DICK.

“ I believe she has some such a design up-
“ on me ; for she offer'd me a book of
“ hymns, a shilling, and a dram to go along
“ with her.”

“ Sir GEORGE.

“ No bad scheme, Dick ; thou hast a fine
“ sober, psalm-singing countenance : and
“ when thou hast been some time in the
“ trammels, may'st make as able a teacher
“ as the best of them.”

“ DICK.

“ Laud, Sir, I want learning.”

“ Sir GEORGE.

“ Oh the spirit, the spirit will supply all
“ that Dick, never fear.”

Is

Is then the spirit of God to be mentioned in this ludicrous manner; to be bandied about from the mouth of vagabond to vagabond, in order to raise a laugh in honour of the devil? but from hence we may imagine that the methodists deliver something with regard to the holy spirit inconsistent with orthodox principles. I shall therefore beg leave to inquire what they do deliver concerning it: That they believe that the spirit of God does assist true christians then, in making their supplications to him now, as well as formerly, is undeniable, and they have the words of St. Paul for it: *we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered.* And this is founded upon a general promise, made to all God's people—Zacharias xii. 10. *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication.*—

We may appeal to the experience of all true christians, whether or no they do not find the spirit of supplication increase in proportion to the increase of God's grace or holy spirit in their hearts: this is all the methodists pretend to, and where is the impropriety of this?

D

Oh!

Oh! but they also pretend to the immediate assistance of the holy spirit in their particular actions: and why not? if there be any such thing as a particular providence, why may we not expect particular directions from God's holy spirit in particular cases?

Does not our church teach us to pray that God's holy spirit may direct and rule our hearts? but our Saviour has told us, that we know no more of the workings of the spirit, than of the wind from whence it cometh, and whether it goeth.

Neither need we know any more of it: but it must be allowed, we know as much; cannot we feel the wind then, do not we know when it makes an impression on our bodies? so easy is it for a spiritual man to know when the spirit makes an impression on his soul. Without acknowledging this, all the expressions of being led by the spirit, walking by the spirit, and such like, must be only so many words without any real meaning; but if we acknowledge, as all christians must, that the holy spirit doth act in general, why not in the particular actions of our lives, for can the one be without the other? does it not frequently happen that the comfort and happiness of our whole lives depend upon
one

one particular action ; and where then is the absurdity of saying, that the holy spirit may, even in the minutest circumstance, direct and rule our hearts ; or is this doctrine such, as should bring sarcasms upon the spirit of God ?

The scene of Mrs. Cole is such outrageous blasphemy throughout, that had I a turn to such vanities, and could I purchase the whole earth by being the author of it, I would not ; I'm almost afraid to transcribe any of the passages in it : but admitting that the methodists are really that contemptible people they are represented, and that they deserve the ridicule which this defamer has vomited upon them ; is that an excuse for his jumbling together things the most holy and prophane ; for his putting the most sacred expressions into the mouths of the most profligate and vile ? in a word, are we to wound the substance of religion in order to kill the shadow ?

Regeneration, in whatever sense the methodists may use it, is one of the most essential articles of the christian religion ; yet this regeneration or new birth, which Christ and his apostles have mentioned with the highest reverence, is, by Mr. Foote, put into the mouth of a bawd, with the most odious and abominable expressions that can be uttered.

She

She gives great commendations to a prostitute, but says, "It is a pity she is such a reprobate;" that is, in the church language, one out of a state of salvation: admitting that she might still commit whoredom, yet still be a child of God.

In the next place he has a fling at a future state, when upon the most infamous occasion, he makes his bawd say to his sharper, "Mercy on us," (mercy on some people indeed, for if God shews only his justice, what will become of them!) "where do you expect to go when you die?" Then he falls upon the whole foundation of christianity at once, in a paragraph which is only fit to be uttered by the devils in hell.

"Mrs. COLF.

"Oh, it was a wonderful work! There
 "had I been tossing in a sea of sin without
 "rudder or compass! And had not the
 "good gentleman piloted me into the har-
 "bour of grace, I must have struck against
 "the rocks of reprobation, and have been
 "quite swallowed up in the whirl-pool of
 "despair."

Here is the state of the blessed and the
 state of the damned made a jest of at once,
 in

in the state of grace and the state of desperation. He then, in aiming a stroke at methodism, gives the preference to the church of Rome, against the protestants; where Mrs. Cole tells the gentlemen, "she went to Boulogne to repent, but the priest would not absolve her without she quitted her business;" he then puts the finishing stroke to the matter by making her say, "so in my last illness I was wish'd to Mr. Squintum"—the rest of the speech is too horridly indecent for me to transcribe; only I must observe, that so far is Mr. Squintum, as Mr. Foote calls a gentleman who happens to have a small cast in his eye; so far I say is he from admitting into his society people of infamous profession, that he obliges them to quit even those that are doubtful, with regard to that sobriety and honesty which he thinks necessary to a true conversion to God; much less would he suffer such wretches as Mrs. Cole among them, with their contagious patched-up sores, without they would submit to a perfect cure.

And whether the paultry reflection cast upon a preacher of God's word, in the name of Squintum, be equitable, I leave to the world; nay, even to Mr. Foote himself; for if the accidental unhappiness of a provincial dialect is not a proper subject for ridicule,
how

how much less are the errors of nature in the matters of bodily defect?

I look upon the methodists as a peculiar people planted by the hand of God in the midst of a very wicked, sinful, and rebellious generation: and his peculiar providence over them is evidently shewn by their yearly increase among those who can neither be justly accused of madness or profligacy.

But they are despised and set at nought, made a bye-word and reproach by those who call themselves people of sense; so were the primitive christians before them—they too were reviled, spit upon, and turn'd out of cities; but the methodists are enthusiasts; so the primitive christians were also called; nay, the very apostles themselves did not escape that opprobrious term, *Agrippa said to Paul, too much learning has made thee mad.*

But for my part I do not rightly know, what is meant by enthusiasm: if people mean by enthusiasm that the methodists pretend to the extraordinary operation of working miracles, or speaking with tongues, they are no enthusiasts, for they never laid claim to any such thing. But if they only mean that enthusiasm is a strong persuasion of the mind, that we are guided in an extraordinary manner

ner by immediate impulses and impressions of the spirit of God: then perhaps they may not injure them.

St. Paul writing to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. Chap. xiii. 5. says, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"—so that according to St. Paul's rule, "he that finds that he hath hitherto contented himself with a bare bodily attendance upon the public worship of God, and following his daily employment on other days, and with abstaining from the more gross and notorious acts of sin; and from doing any hurt or injury to his neighbour; and has rested finally upon these, as the whole of what christianity requires of him," is in no state of christianity at all: he is a reprobate; nor can he ever have any assurance that he is in a state of salvation, till he knows that Jesus Christ is in him, by the indwelling of his holy spirit.

It is indeed, I think, no small honour, and should be a great comfort to the methodists, that they are treated in a manner so much resembling the treatment of the primitive christians; and I trust in the divine grace, that it will instigate them to an holy emulation of those glorious patterns of purity and simplicity—let them have a steadfast
faith

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faith

faith and humble hope in the almighty power, and pray that he would open the eyes of those who are without cause their enemies; their prayers they have had in time of danger; and surely they have had their share in bringing down the blessings which the Lord has lately showered upon us. Whatever may be the opinion of the world of the methodist teachers, as some people affect to call them, they are happy in a conscious knowledge, that they never taught any thing but a fervent duty to God, and an unbounded benevolence to man; and as for the rest they freely leave it to their pleasure-taking, velvet-mouth'd brethren.

It is urged by the favourers of the stage, and other light and vain performances, as a very just, and, as they think, unanswerable argument, that ridicule is the proper weapon to be used against vice: but is not this a weak plea in support of an unjustifiable entertainment? I am afraid it is: for surely to list ridicule against vice, is to tickle with a feather, where we should whip with a rod.

But let me go a step or two farther, and assert that in general ridicule is the weapon which vice makes use of to defend herself, and confound her enemies: it is indeed a combat in which self-diffident virtue has
no

no share. Give me leave to mention, as a proof of what I have here asserted, a few corroborating facts; and first, that well-known one, which indeed I have mentioned already, of Socrates and Aristophanes.

That divine philosopher, (if we may call him divine, who was almost a heathen, through the unhappy prejudice of education) was allowed to be the first man for wisdom and virtue, not only in Greece, famous for great men, but in the whole world: yet this man, when he was in his highest reputation, when the principal youths of Athens were under his tuition, and his advice was taken in the most important and difficult affairs; this very man, at this very time, could not with all his glory get the better of the ridicule of Aristophanes; who, in a comedy called *The Clouds*, made a jest of him with such success, that tho' the people of Athens idoliz'd Socrates next to their Gods, they run after this burlesque foppery night after night: and why must I add, that some of the best writers have dated the fall of the greatest pagan philosopher that ever lived, from the first exhibition of this contemptible farce, which, however it might appear in acting, is such a poor piece of writing, that it is very little superior to the *Minor*.

E

I shall

I shall not attempt to make any comparison between a fact, which happened so long ago in Greece, and any thing done in England at this day; and yet perhaps there might be a greater likeness between the ridicule, the ridiculer, and the ridiculed, than has afforded many a writer room for a specious and no far-fetch'd parallel.

The philosopher and the divine are alike in this; that as the one was said to have taught, so the other is said to teach new doctrines; the divine, like the philosopher before him, is reported to debauch the morals of his hearers, and they both agree in an affableness of disposition, a patience under injuries, and a steady reliance on the disposer of all divine things; whether there will be any thing synonymous in their death, time only can shew.

As for Mr. Foote and Aristophanes, there is a very great resemblance between them. Both being buffoons, and libellers, instead of satyrists; and their pieces alike temporary, local and personal, which leaves them destitute of any merit, (supposing them to have any at all) exclusive from what they derive from an instant of time and a peculiar spot of ground.

But

But one would think that Mr. Foote, in the former part of his production, had been sufficiently jocular upon religion and virtue; that he had treated God and his gospel with freedom enough, without going any farther lengths in the works of the devil; but it seems that he was of a contrary opinion: and as he had before made free with the theory of religion, he now falls upon the practical part of it; and in the close of his medley performance, attempts to bring divine worship itself into ridicule, by turning his audience into a congregation, and preaching them a sermon.

I would willingly avoid the transcription of this, if possible; but as there is no way of removing dirt and filthiness, but by breaking it up, and laying it open; I hope in that sense I shall be pardoned, for what otherwise would be unjustifiable.

SHIFT. *Addressing himself to Sir George.*
 And what becomes of your poor servant Shift?
 Your father talks of lending me a lift—
 A great man's promise, when his turn is serv'd!
 Capons on promises, would soon be starv'd:
 No, on myself alone I'll now rely:
 'Gad I've a thriving traffic in my eye—

Here I am informed that he assum'd something like a canonical habit, and by squinting, sprawling and vociferation, attempted to imitate a very able and worthy preacher: he then proceeds,

Near the mad mansions of Moor-fields I'll
bawl,

Friends, fathers, mothers, sisters, sons and all,
Shut up your shops, and listen to my call.—

With labour, toil, all second means dispense,
And live a rent-charge upon providence.

Prick up your ears; a story now I'll tell,
Which once a widow, and her child befell,
I know the mother, and her daughter well.

Poor, it is true, they were; but never wanted,
For whatsoe'er they ask'd, was always granted:
One fatal day, the matron's truth was try'd,
She wanted meat and drink, and fairly cry'd.
(*Child*) Mother you cry! (*Mother*) oh, child,
I've got no bread.

(*Child*) What matters that? why providence
an't dead!

[say,
With reason good, this truth the child might
For there came in at noon, that very day,
Bread, greens, potatoes, and a leg of mutton;
A better sure, a table ne'er was put on.

Ay! that might be, ye cry, with those poor souls,
But we ne'er had a rasher for the coals:

And d'ye deserve it? how d'ye spend your days;
In pastimes, prodigality, and plays!

Let's

Let's go see Foote, ah, he's a precious limb!
 Old Nick will soon a foot-ball make of him!
 For foremost rows in side-boxes you shove,
 Think you to meet with side-boxes above?
 Where giggling girls and powder'd fops
 may fit?

No; you will all be cram'd into the pit,
 And crowd the house for Satan's benefit.
 Oh, what you snivel; well, do so no more,
 Drop, to attone, your money at the door,
 And, if I please—I'll give it to the poor.

When I consider we live in a christian country, I'm surprized how there can be a person so thoroughly seared to all religious feelings, to all sense of his duty towards God and man, as to give birth to such a piece of blasphemy, as the foregoing; but when I hear that it has been delivered with applause for a number of nights successively, in the hearing of people who profess themselves christians, I cannot help fearing that God is about to withdraw his grace totally from us; and that we shall be given up, like another Nineveh, the great city, to ruin and destruction.

Oh! but this is not intended to make a mock of sober and rational religion; but to bring into discountenance the extravagant rants of a mad enthusiast, who calls to the
 in-

industrious to shut up their shops, and foregoing all attempts to help themselves, "Live
" a rent-charge upon providence."

Did the clergyman, who is here pointed at, ever give such absurd, such wicked advice?—No ; look thro' all the ranks of those who are called methodists, and you will see that there is not one in ten that does not carry on some trade or occupation profitable to himself, and advantagious to his country. It is true indeed, methodists have been cautioned by their pastor, for carrying on trade detrimental to the good of society, contrary to the word of God, and therefore unlawful. But people should consider before they advance contradictions ; for if the principal methodist preacher was such a man as his enemies would represent him ; a rapacious blood-sucker ; a picker of the pockets of the industrious ; sure it would be the most unpolitical thing in the world in him to broach a doctrine, which must infallibly dry up the only fountain from whence the stream to quench his thirst of riches must flow. But the publick may be assured, that he never was the promoter of any such pernicious tenets, which by the impoverishing of individuals, must in the end beggar all.

But

But there is another thing particularly leveled at this person in the foregoing discourse; I mean the story which Mr. Foote introduces of the mother and the child, in which he most impiously and loosely treats the name of providence.

That the method of preaching, adopted by our methodist teacher, is in many respects very different from what is generally heard in parish churches, is not to be denied; but it must be considered, that the bulk of his congregation is very different also from the generality that go there; and such as precept would have very little effect upon, unenforced by example. This therefore has induced him frequently to bring into his discourse, short and apposite relations, (the truth of which he is able to testify) and he thinks, and finds by experience, this works stronger upon their minds, than if he was to follow the beaten track of common sermon preaching.

Of this kind is the story of the mother and the child, laugh'd at by Mr. Foote, which, whether it was ever made use of at the tabernacle or no, by no means deserves ridicule, as it tends to encourage that security and

and faith which all christians ought to place in the goodness of providence ; a power, the goodness of which, I'm inform'd, Mr. Foote has least, of all mankind, a right to doubt. But, as he says himself, his time is not yet come, I hope in God he will have his call ; for I am sure if he does not experience regeneration and new birth, his soul is in a very miserable state.

As for the methodists, I only advise them to sit down under the injuries which is done them with patience ; to consider they are not of this world, and that therefore this world will revile and persecute them. We cannot serve God and Mammon ; but there is a place where the saints shall enjoy

Eternal rest, an active blissful state ;
Joys ever new, transporting, ever great !
In lofty strains, which angels cannot sing,
There saints shall praise their priest, and heavenly king :

Ascribe salvation to the Lord their God,
And to the Lamb, who wash'd them in his blood !

No pain or grief, no pinching wants are there ;
No sickness, loss, disease, or any snare ;
Past all their groans, distress, and all their care ;
Past doubt, and trouble, hope and anxious fear ;
Past

Past all the train of ills that here annoy;
 There shall be virtuous love, and holy joy.
 No tempter there with wiles to break their
 peace;

The evil thoughts they hate for ever cease;
 No sordid views possess the happy mind,
 Or fleshly lusts arise of any kind:

For former evil things are past away,
 And bliss succeeds, without the least alloy.
 There God himself shall dwell, and there
 display

His nature, and his works, thro' an eternal
 day.

Perfections infinite held thus to view,
 Their contemplations must be ever new:
 While their exalted head their thoughts
 employ,

Transform'd like him, they there partake
 his joy.

With Angel, and Archangel pleasure share;
 And spirits of the just, made perfect there.
 Where useful knowledge grows without
 decay,

And clouds of ignorance are done away:
 While mysteries deep of providential ways,
 Unvail'd, shall fill their souls with love and
 praise.

Where faith is swallow'd up in perfect sight,
 And hope in full fruition, and delight;
 But never-failing charity abounds,
 Thro' endless years, in their eternal rounds:

F

There

There all their powers shall find divine
employ,
And vast eternity crown all their joy.



T H E

*Following Observations on the Stage
are submitted to all Christians.*

I. **T**HE stage, with all its pompous
train, is of a pagan original, in-
vented for the honour and worship of dæ-
mons.

II. Even pagans, and among them some
who had not the greatest regard to virtue,
abominated play-houses as so many semina-
ries of vice.

III. The primitive church look'd upon
the stage as the scene not only of folly, but
impiety; therefore the christians, in those
days, durst not frequent the publick shews
that were exhibited for the entertainment of
the people.

IV. The diversions of the stage have been
discountenanc'd by the wisest states and king-
doms,

doms, and even by those who, upon their first appearance, were fond of them, as the Greeks and Romans.

V. Stage-plays are no where authorized or allowed by the church of England as such ; but every where condemn'd by the purity of her doctrine, and by some of her most eminent writers.

VI. Among the papists, who have almost converted all religion into plays, are found enemies to the stage.

VII. All pompous diversions are dangerous to a christian life, but none more so than plays ; for they give so nice and natural a representation of the passions, that they soon affect the heart, especially with that of dishonourable love, when represented as chaste and innocent ; for the more innocent it appears, the more easily it insinuates itself. Hence it is, too many go from a play, so charm'd with the pleasures of love, that they are prepar'd to put in practice what immodesties they saw represented there. For as Minutius Felix expresses it, ' some-times a luscious actor shall whine you into ' love, and give the disease he counterfeits.'

VIII. Clemens Alexandrinus, who liv'd A. D. 192. declares against stage-plays as schools of impiety, pestilent sports, and introductions to all kinds of immorality; he calls the theatre the *chair of pestilence*; ἐστὶν Ἀπειχέλιος—τὰ δέαιρα καθίδραν λοιμῶν. Lib. iii. p. 254. Colon. 1688.

IX. Chrysostom, who was born 354. with great warmth reproves the people of Antioch for their resorting to play-houses, which he stiles the *devil's conventicles*; and says, he would never cease preaching till he had dissipated that devilish theatre. Stage plays he calls the *devil's pomps, fables of Satan, demonical Mysteries, impure food of the Devil*; *nes usquam prorsus quiescam, quod usque diabolicum illud dispergam theatrum.* Hom. 7. in Mat. Vid. Hom. in Eph. Colos. de David & Saul.

Speaking of David and Bathsheba, he says, David saw her, and was wounded in his eye. Let those hear this who contemplate the beauty of others, and who are possess'd with an unruly desire after stage-plays, who say, we behold them without hurt. What hear I? David is hurt, and art not thou? He is wounded, and can I trust to thy strength? Did he fall, who had so great a measure of the spirit? And canst thou stand? Yet he beheld

beheld not an harlot, but an honest woman, and that not in the theatre, but at home; but thou beholdest an harlot in the playhouse, where even the very place itself makes the soul liable to punishment.

Neither dost thou only see, but hearest unclean words and obscene songs; thou art not iron or stone, but a man subject to the common frailty of nature.—We can't serve two masters; now he who goes to church one day, and to stage-plays another day, serves two masters. *Hom. 1. on Psal. 50. & Hom. in Psal. 119.*

X. St. Austin, born A. D. 335, does not only look upon stage-plays as improper diversions for christian people, but counts them more abominable than sacrifices offer'd to idols. *De Civit. Dei, l. iii. ad Marcel. & lib. 2. c. 28. p. 77. Edit. in Octavo, Vol. 1. Excud. Jac. Stoer, M. D. XC. VI.*

In another place he calls plays the pomps of the Devil, which we renounce in baptism: What art thou, Oh christian, says he, when thou professest one thing, and doest another? Going one while into the church to pray, and a-while after into the play-house to cry out impudently with stage-players—*Post modicum in Spectaculis cum Histrionibus impudice clamare. De Symbol. ad Catech. l. 4.*

XI. Salvian

XI. Sálvian, a priest, or as some say bishop of Marseilles, who writ in the Vth century, under Zeno the Emperor, says, there is nothing either sinful or vain, which is not acted in the publick shews—*Nil ferme vel Criminum vel Flagitiorum est quod in Spectaculis non sit. De Gubern. Dei Oxon. CIC. IOC. XXXIII. p. 186.* I shall only speak, adds he, of the cirques and theatres where such things are acted, that a man can't so much as speak of, yea remember them, without defiling himself; *p. 189.*

He calls plays deluders of our hopes, cheats of life, and repast of the devil, *page 193.* for while we divert ourselves in the theatre, we perish, according to the sacred text: Prov. x. 23. *It is as sport to a fool to do mischief.*

So, in like manner, while we are sporting among those filthy and disgraceful fights, we commit wickedness, and our danger is the greater; because though they seem to be outwardly innocent, yet they are most pernicious—for there the salvation of christian people is destroyed, and the majesty of God prophaned by sacrilegious superstitions; for Minerva is honour'd in the places for exercise, Venus in the theatres, Neptune in the cirques,

circues, Mars in the amphitheatre, and Mercury in the wrestling-places. In one place there is immodesty, in another lasciviousness, in another madness, and the devil in them all: nay, all the devils in hell are in every one of these pastimes; for they preside over the place dedicated to their worship—*Alibi est Impudicitia, alibi Lascivia.—ubique Dæmon*—*Præsent sedibus suo cultui dedicatis.* p. 210.

Thus have the fathers of the christian church always declared against plays as public nurseries of profaneness, and shall the sons and daughters of the church of England countenance and support those lewd associations? And did the bishops of the church, in its corrupt state, also pass so many severe censures upon the theatre, and shall the children of the reformation vindicate it? Shall those who are members of the true Apostolick church, stain their christian character, by resorting to those places, where evil communication corrupt good manners? Shall those who attend the prayers of the church, who eat and drink at the sacred altar, defile themselves with the abominations of the heathens? Shall we encourage those ludicrous diversions, that have been the aversion not only of the best christians in all ages, but of sober heathens? To put up the stage therefore, is to pull down the church.

Were

Were the primitive clergy now alive, would they have encouraged the licentiousness of the modern stage, or allowed those sallies of profane wit, that invite men thither? Would not they have play'd the artillery of the church against those forts of darkness? Doubtless the satire of the pulpit would at least have thunder'd as loud as the blasphemies of the stage.

Where are the successors of those holy fathers of the church? Oh ye ministers of the altar awake! rouse up yourselves, and sound the alarm in the holy mount. For never was the church more in danger from the stage, (that *chair of pestilence*, as Cl. Alexandrinus calls it; that dramatic bawdy house, as Tertullian calls Pompey's theatre) the vast crowds of Italians that are lately come over, and now roam about this great city, will pull down faster than you can build up, if you, gentlemen of the sacred order, be not co-operators with the magistrate in sapping the foundations of the stage.

What success can you hope for in the pulpit, while these abominations are indulged; while these unhallowed groves and high places of immorality are frequented?

Shall

Shall fathers, general councils, and the whole current of antiquity, yea, uncultivated heathens, damn the corruptions of the stage, and you sit still? How long will ye suffer the lambs of your flock to be worry'd by those wolves in sheeps cloathing? Why don't you thunder out the anathema's of the church against the theatre, from whence virtue is banish'd for its seriousness, and where lewdness is factor for hell?